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ABSTRACT

The booklet was developed from experience in presenting lectures and workshops for those working with children having emotional and behavioral difficulties. The text is organized around activities individuals can do to better understand themselves and their work with such children. Activities and related information cover such alternative approaches to behavior problems as the causal, behaviorist and interactionist approaches and the raising of self-esteem as the facilitator of change. Major studies demonstrating the importance of self-concept are briefly summarized. Suggestions for teachers conducting a simple and useful research project are offered. Specific suggestions for working with troubled children include labeling the act and not the child, removing the threat of failure for the child by taking the risk oneself, using non-verbal interventions (e.g., pat on the back), and avoiding negative comments. Also discussed are stress and frustration at work and the self-concept of the school. Twelve key factors for school effectiveness are outlined. Numerous cartoon drawings illustrate the text. (DB)

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AWMC

THEY CAN BECAUSE . . . . .

A Workshop in Print

by
George Robinson and Barbara Maines

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WORKSHOP PERSPECTIVES 3

1988

EC 2110 78

Workshop Perspectives is a series published by AWMC for those working with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. They are intended to enhance workers' ideas, skills and professional expertise. The series has no particular format. Workshop Perspectives 3 breaks new ground for the Association with its interactive approach. Any comments on it would be welcomed by the series Editor.

Workshop Perspectives 1
Knowledge and Treatment by Sula Wolff — £1.

Workshop Perspectives 2
Teachers' Strategies in Coping with Behaviour
Difficulties in First Year Junior Children
by Alice Laing and Maurice Chazan — £4.

Available from John Visser AWMC Publications Editor, Westhill College,
Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LL.

Barbara Maines

has been an educational psychologist since 1968 when she began work in Barking, carrying her IQ tests from school to school and writing long reports, the content of which did little to enlighten teachers, let alone help them to help their pupils.

She now describes herself as a "clean hands" psychologist working mainly with teachers in and out of the classroom, helping to clarify difficulties and to plan, monitor and evaluate interventions.

She has worked for Avon LEA since 1975 and her association with George Robinson began when she became the educational psychologist for Woodstock Special School in January 1985.

George Robinson

started teaching in 1967, working in primary schools in England before teaching for the Ministry of Overseas Development in the Bahamas. On his return he worked in a school for children with severe learning difficulties and then in a unit for disruptive pupils for eight years.

In 1982 he took up his current post in Avon as headteacher of a school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

His interest in self-concept developed from his work with disruptive pupils and he describes himself as a "dirty hands" Head, feeling that it is essential that he is still seen as a competent teacher.

Throughout this booklet we have used the male pronoun. It gets tedious to read if both male and female alternatives are offered. We hope that you will assume that everything we say applies to both boys and girls.

"Everyone has inside himself . . . what shall I call it . . . a piece of good news. Everyone is a very great and important character. Yes, that's what we have to tell them. Every man must be persuaded, even if he's in rags, that he is immensely, immensely important. Every one must respect him and make him respect himself too. They must listen to him attentively, don't stand on top of him, don't stand in his light, but look at him with gentleness, deference, give him great, great hopes, he needs them, especially if he's young . . . spoil him. Yes, make him grow proud."

BURNT FLOWER BED

Ugo Betti (an Italian play) quoted in "100 Ways to Enhance Self-concept in the Classroom".

This booklet is an attempt to present in a written form some of the things we have been talking about in the lectures and workshops we have given during the last few months. We have tried to convey the ideas in a variety of ways and have included some of the activities and some of the humour which you would find in our workshops. You can expect to think, write, talk and even crayon your way through this workbook . . .

We will tell you about our beliefs and assumptions. Some of these are supported by research findings; some have developed from our own experiences of working with children in difficulty. We are not trying to offer easy solutions so if you are looking for a short read which gives you all the answers then save your money. We will ask you to use your own experiences to help you pose questions and then to find your own solutions. If this "Workshop in Print" is to work it needs your active participation.

As educators we often refer to school situations because that is where we do our work with children. However, we do feel that the same approach can be used in all situations where adults work with and live with children. So if you are not a teacher then forgive us for referring to the classroom so often. We ask you to use your own experience to turn the ideas around and modify them to fit your own situation.

Introduction

The needs of children with behavioural problems should be viewed in the same way as those of pupils with any other special educational need; i.e. the same process of identifying the problems and then devising strategies to overcome them should be used. We are used to the fact that the remediation of learning difficulties can be a slow process and small steps of progress are to be celebrated. It is more difficult but just as important to be patient when helping children improve their behaviour.

We must, however, recognise that children with behavioural problems are likely to challenge an adult's authority in a more fundamental way than a child with a learning difficulty. If a child is behaving in a way that prevents him, and often the other children, from benefiting from your care or your teaching then this is bound to affect the way you perceive yourself as an effective and successful worker. Under these circumstances the support and understanding of colleagues and the sharing of an agreed approach is fundamental.

ACTIVITY ONE

Think carefully about your own reactions to the challenge of a child with a behavioural problem.

1. Do you ever feel anxious or threatened?
2. Do you often struggle to protect your authority and maintain your own self-esteem?
3. Are these strategies sometimes at the expense of the needs of the child?

If any of these answers are "yes" then is there another way?

READ ON . . .

There is no simple answer but the way we think about the problem is important. We hope that this booklet will suggest a new outlook:

"AN OPTIMIST IS WRONG JUST ABOUT AS OFTEN AS A PESSIMIST, THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT HE HAS A LOT MORE FUN."

"Your macramé lessons have had a wonderful effect upon the pupils Mr Jones."

VARIOUS APPROACHES
THE CAUSAL APPROACH

The adult encountering a child with emotional, behavioural and/or learning difficulties might well be forgiven for feeling some degree of confusion at the amount of background information offered to explain the reasons for the behaviour.

Records from and discussions with other professionals may yield facts about the child's social, medical and academic history and the expectation is that the possession of these facts will in itself help the teacher to help the child. This might be described as the CAUSAL APPROACH. Although it may be important to understand the background to a child's problems, the weakness of the causal approach is that it concentrates on features of the child's life which are outside your experience and beyond your control. It can make you feel powerless to help the child because you cannot change the past and his world outside your institution is often difficult to influence and improve.

We believe you must work in the here and now, concentrating on what can be done in the time that you have with the child in your care. Whatever social or emotional burden the child arrives with each morning you have the rest of the day and THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN DO.

Two approaches which do work in the here and now are the BEHAVIOURIST and the INTERACTIONIST approaches.

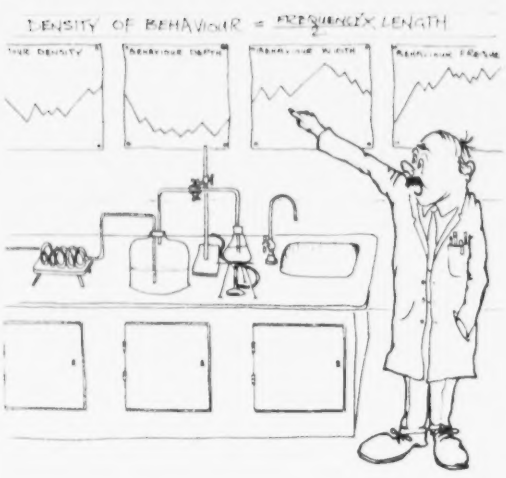
THE BEHAVIOURIST APPROACH

is widely discussed elsewhere and is often successfully used to devise very effective classroom techniques for increasing the frequency of desirable behaviour or decreasing the frequency of undesirable behaviour.

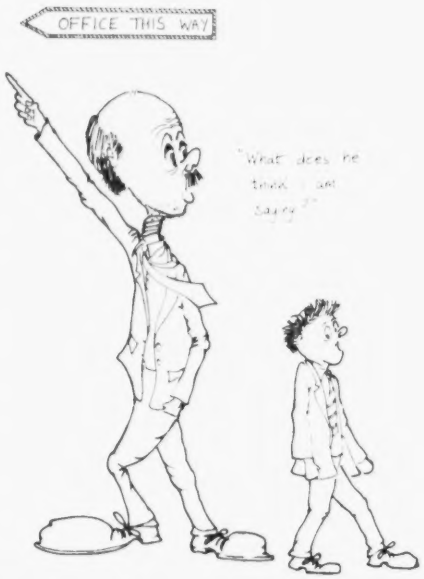
If a behaviour modification programme is implemented successfully it might be a consequence that, if the child is more acceptable, others will behave differently towards him and he will begin to feel valued, successful, liked.

In the behaviourist approach we may hope to see an improved self-image as a result of the change in behaviour. The interactionist approach turns this about and suggests that an improved self-image sets the scene for the behavioural gains and in the face of low self-concept, improvements are more difficult to achieve. Whilst the person, child or adult, feels bad, stupid, ugly etc., we can expect him to behave accordingly. When he feels good, liked and valued then behaviour can improve.

An additional bonus could be that the teacher also experiences success by using a strategy systematically and observing positive results.



"We can change that behaviour if we add a little reward for the other and reduce the frequency of the previous



THE INTERACTIONIST APPROACH

When talking to children we so often hear them say that adults responsible for their care or education "don't like them, think they are useless, don't listen to them . . . etc." When we talk to those same adults we generally meet kind and concerned people who are genuinely looking for ways to relate to the child in their care.

What has caused this misunderstanding? Why is there such a mis-match in the perceptions of the relationship between the two?

The interactionist approach is based on the assumption that the way a person feels about himself determines the way he behaves and the way he interprets the meaning of the behaviour of others towards him.

Mead (1934) presents a framework to explain how we operate as individuals and relate to others. He states that we live in a symbolic world where spoken language and body-language convey meaning. People make interpretations from what we say and do. We predict the behaviour of others and gauge our behaviour according to the expectations we believe others have. In every situation we construct a self-concept consistent with the expectations we perceive others to have of us.

The interactionist approach forces us to think, not just about the symbols of interaction, but how the symbols are interpreted. And this includes the interpretation of all aspects of our communication, not just what we say but how we say it! Our non-verbal behaviour contains many important signals.

WE SPEAK WITH OUR TONGUES

WE COMMUNICATE WITH OUR WHOLE BODIES

"No! I am not angry"

"IT'S NOT (JUST) WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S THE WAY THAT YOU SAY IT!"
The subject of body language and its importance to the meaning of the message conveyed is hard to study in print but there are training videos and workshops which offer opportunities to pursue this topic in detail (Chisholm, B. et al. 1986). Always be sure that the way you sit or stand, the tone of voice you use and your gestures contribute to the message you give.

THE RAISING OF SELF-ESTEEM IS THE FACILITATOR OF CHANGE

ACTIVITY TWO

HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOU?

We were all pupils and we all have memories of our school days. Can you write down the names of five of your teachers?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

How many are primary school teachers and how many secondary?

Think back to an incident from your own school days when a teacher made you feel really bad about yourself and write it down.

Many people can easily conjure up those memories and the bad feelings which accompanied them.

Now do the same thing but this time remember an incident when a teacher made you feel really good and proud of yourself.

Feel better now?

DO YOU BELIEVE US?

Most people have no difficulty in remembering these interactions, even if they happened a long time ago.

If you can vividly remember interactions with significant adults from your own childhood, then you can assume that in the role of teacher or other worker you are creating these memories for the children in your care.

When we talk to people after this activity we often hear from them:

1. The good memories are more often from primary days and the bad from secondary school, especially grammar schools for those of us who are old enough to have experienced them!
2. The incident was frequently a very public occasion in front of other children.
3. The adult involved was important to you, a "significant other."
4. Maybe a label was used which was then associated with you and used by other people.
5. The bad memories were often characterised by:

   A sense of injustice.

   A lack of opportunity to make a response.

   No strategies to put things right, e.g. work marked as poor but you did not know how to make it better.

ACTIVITY THREE

Think about your recent interactions with some of the children in your care, maybe one that you really like and feel successful with, and another who is more difficult to like and about whom you feel less confident that you are really helping.

Put yourself in their shoes and imagine how they might remember you in ten years' time.

Write a memory for one of your pupils.

Accepting the significance of our interactions with children doesn't tell the whole story. The message we intend to convey is subject to the perceptions of the receiver and children who feel badly about themselves may distort or misinterpret intentions.

Our interest in self-concept as a determining aspect of children's learning and behaviour led us to read widely and argue extensively about the various theories and the terminology. In his book "Improved Reading through Counselling" (Lawrence 1973) Denis Lawrence offers a model on which we have based our thinking.

This is our version:

> A person's self-concept is his perception of his unique personal characteristics such as appearance, ability, temperament, physique, attitude and beliefs. These determine his view of his position in society and his value to and relationships with other people.
>
> The development of self-concept is a continuous process which begins with a baby's earliest interaction with caring adults and continues as the child develops. The significant person in the early years is the parent, but on entering school the child begins relationships with new "significant others."

SELF-CONCEPT has three aspects:

SELF-IMAGE

A child grows up with all sorts of ideas about himself, his abilities, attributes and appearance. These are acquired and influenced by his perceptions of how he is accepted and valued by the adults who are for him.

This self-image goes with him at all times and influences what he does and how he behaves. There can be lots of aspects of self-image, social, physical, intellectual, and they are all influenced by the

significant other in the child's life. A negative self-image is a handicap that we as significant others must recognise and try to alleviate. The environment we create for a child must not reinforce his feelings of failure, rejection and reminders of personal inadequacies.

If we could look in on a child's self-image it would resemble an album of self-portraits, sometimes candid, sometimes posed; some are detailed and some enlarged but all are close-ups, all are revealing and all are very personal.

IDEAL SELF

From his interactions with significant others the child forms an impression of the abilities and personal qualities which are admired and valued. From these he can compose a picture of the desirable person, an ideal self.

SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is the total evaluation a person makes of himself and the degree of respect with which he regards himself. If self-image is poor and incompatible with an ideal self which seems unattainable then self-esteem suffers.

Children who have warm, affectionate relationships with parents have higher self-esteem even when they are relatively inadequate at specific skills. High self-esteem provides a child with the confidence to attempt difficult things without an incapacitating fear of failure. A pupil with a low self-esteem finds it difficult to try new strategies. He protects what he has and continues to behave in a manner consistent with his poor view of himself.

If he feels rejected and views himself as unacceptable and valueless then he does not regard disapproval as a reaction to his behaviour but to himself.

Attempts to work with children to improve self-esteem must offer feedback which counteracts this interpretation under conditions which are accepting and non-judgemental.

The whole process is a **BEHAVIOURAL DIALOGUE** between the developing self and the significant other. The child's developing self is engaged in a process of internalising and organising; the significant other is engaged in the process of reflecting and interpreting. We must be in control of this dialogue, ensuring that the messages, both verbal and non-verbal, help a child to feel respected and valued.

However, the messages that we give can sometimes be mis-read by the child who receives them in the context of his self-image. **BIASED SCANNING** is the process by which information which is consistent with the self-concept is eagerly accepted; information inconsistent with self-concept is either ignored, misinterpreted or rejected. Children with low self-concept will look for information to confirm their poor view of themselves. Significant others must constantly offer unambiguous messages of acceptance.

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS

If we consider that a person's self-concept is important and that it has an overall effect on the way he receives and perceives our behavioural dialogue and,
if we are to make use of these ideas in the way we behave towards children
then we must give ourselves an hypothesis from which to work.

Ours is:

1. If an individual has a poor self-concept, if he thinks badly of himself, then there are fewer constraints on his behaviour. He believes that other people expect him to behave badly and he cares little how other people value him because he does not value himself.
2. If an individual has a poor self-concept and is reluctant to face the possibility of failure he will avoid situations which might expose him, e.g. learning something new or behaving in a different way.
3. An improved self-concept will give a child the security to try and learn something new. He may fail but he is secure enough not to feel a failure.
4. An improved picture of self might reduce inappropriate behaviour. When an individual thinks more highly of himself then old patterns of behaviour become incompatible with the improved view of self.

When a child believes he is really a "good kid" then change can occur.

5. **SELF IS LEARNED.**
6. **SELF-CONCEPT CAN BE IMPROVED.**
7. **SIGNIFICANT OTHERS, YOU, AFFECT SELF-CONCEPT.**

RESEARCH

Research is far too important to be left to academics.

So far apart from a passing reference to the ideas of Mead (1934) and Lawrence (1973) we have offered you our own assumptions and beliefs as the justification for writing this booklet. These assumptions and beliefs, a personal philosophy, developed from a mixture of our own unique experiences and the reading and research findings which engage us in a way that gives meaning and understanding to our work and enables us to question and expand our approach. It is "biased scanning" again. There is so much material waiting on the library shelves than an impartial and thorough evaluation would leave us no time to spend with children. When reviewing the research we followed the reference trail and we have included in the bibliography only the work we found interesting, enjoyable or enlightening. To whet your appetite we will mention five of our favourites:

How often do we use research like a drunken sailor.... for support when we are in the dark?

1. LAWRENCE (1973)

Several pieces of work have looked for an improvement in self-concept after an intervention intended to raise attainment, i.e. "Will he feel better about himself if we teach him to read?" We like Lawrence's approach better; he asks the question "Will he read better if we help him to feel better about himself?".

The answer is "YES" and all you have to do is to spend some time being nice and approving, showing an interest and telling him he is a good kid!

Lawrence offered some brief training to volunteers and they then "counselled" groups of primary school children identified as backward readers. The results showed that the counselling had more effect on reading progress than extra teaching.

Our own experience with disturbed children who often also have learning difficulties is that "extra help" can sometimes confirm a child's feelings of failure and this might work against progress.

Subsequent research by Lawrence and others has confirmed that any remedial intervention is more likely to be successful if the teacher systematically pays attention to the pupil's self-concept.

The recent emphasis on parent involvement in children's reading probably owes its success to the sharing of the positive experience by the parent, the child and the school.

2. GIBBY AND GIBBY (1976)

They arranged for some high achieving students to take some attainment tests and a self-esteem inventory. A week later the students were called back to re-sit the tests but this time half of them were given a slip of paper telling them that they had done badly last time. Guess what this did to their results? . . .

RIGHT! Oh Gibby and Gibby, Why didn't you tell some of them that they had done really well? That would have been so much kinder!

3. HARTLEY (1986)

Robert Hartley starts his piece of work by describing his own situation as a student facing the awful prospect of preparing to re-sit his G.C.E. O-Level examination. Faced with a blank sheet of paper and an equally blank mind he produces an especially good piece of work by imagining that he is a BBC newsreader. When the piece of work comes back with praise from the teacher, Hartley can remember thinking, "Why hadn't they told me they wanted me to be someone else?"

In his own research work he then demonstrates that children can significantly improve their performance when they attempt tasks in role as the cleverest pupil in the class. However, when the children go on to discuss their success they disown it as someone else's work . . . "Somebody else was doing them. I bet when I do them I will get them all wrong!".

4. PYGMALION IN THE CLASSROOM

In 1986 Rosenthal and Jacobson published their account of an experiment in which they attempted to demonstrate that feeding teachers false information about children's high ability would result in an improved performance on IQ tests for those pupils.

This experiment produced one of the most vehement and fascinating controversies in the field of experimental educational psychology. (See Pilling & Pringle,1978, for an account of all the evidence).

The experiment was justifiably criticised on the grounds of poor use of tests and statistical technique but the more fundamental issue discussed has been:

Are we justified in assuming that feeding teachers information about pupils is sufficient to alter the teachers' expectations? Unless we first establish that expectations have been altered we cannot look for any effects.

Where this has been done there is some evidence that pupil performance is affected. Palardy (1969) looked at the attainments of boys in classes where the teacher expected boys to make slower progress than girls and compared the results with those where the teacher believed boys and girls to be equally able.

IMPLICATIONS

If teacher expectations can really alter pupil performance then we are even more powerful than we thought we were!

In order to have an effect on the child our expectations for his success must be communicated to him in some way.

If we could get the communication right then we don't need the altered expectations in order to achieve the desired results.

IDEA ONE . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Manipulate your own behaviour; try behaving towards a pupil as though you believed him to be better, cleverer, nicer than you really think he is. Perhaps he will get the message and behave as he thinks you expect him to!

If there is no immediate change . . . well you haven't lost anything and you have tried something positive. You can't have done any harm and change might still happen. It is often a slow process. Don't hope for miracles!

5. CLARK & WALBERG (1968)

Although most people regard praise as something which should be offered generously but not excessively this piece of research showed that "over the top" works well under certain conditions. Six classes of 10-13 year old children with reading difficulties were offered very frequent praise for a period of three weeks. Each positive comment was recorded by the pupil on a special tally card so that the child retained lasting evidence of the praise.

After three weeks three of the teachers were asked to increase the frequency of the praise by a factor of two to three. The other three were just told to keep up the good work.

After a further three weeks the most frequently praised group showed a significantly greater improvement in reading attainment than the control group.

This may be attributed to:

very frequent praise.
recording of each positive statement.
intervention only lasting for a few weeks.

More work needed but in the meantime, Praise him, Praise him, Praise him, but make sure he is counting!

Useful research does not depend on vast data collection exercises, access to huge samples and an army of assistants. Many of the most creative and enlightening pieces of work have been small-scale, simple projects. The process of asking your own questions and finding answers which you can use to change the way you work is important and exciting. Reading about other people's work, however good, cannot compare with doing your own.

"If research is a product, in the end it is only the experience of production, and access to the means of production, that makes it usable."

Paley, J. (1980)

For example:

Just to show you that we too can do research we will tell you about a small project we have carried out in Woodstock School. It is offered only as an example of "doing it yourself".

Can we use research to show us the way and illuminate our understanding?

DO THE CHILDREN UNDERSTAND US?

The suspicion that the language used by adults in this school is not fully understood by the children and that this may be an explanation for some of the inconsequential behaviour led us to ask:

THE QUESTION

Why is everybody taking such care to check out that the pupils understand what is said to them? Teachers are not content with a nod; they generally ask the pupil to explain what he has understood. Is this an intuitive response to a deficit in the pupils? Are we behaving towards them as though they do not easily understand language and if so is our behaviour appropriate?

WHAT WILL WE MEASURE?

Understanding of spoken language without other non-verbal cues.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE IT?

All children to be tested by their classteachers on the TEST OF RECEPTION OF GRAMMAR (TROG) Bishop (1982).

CHOICE OF TEST. This test is quick and simple to administer; it appears to have high face validity (measures what it seems to be measuring) and the test results provide a basis from which to plan a remedial intervention.

METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION. It was agreed that all testing should be done by the classteachers so that they are not just given the results of a test carried out by someone else but actually observe the child and are aware of the type of errors made.

THE RESULTS

We identified a group of children with severe problems in their reception of language. Whilst the school population as a whole was slightly skewed downwards there was a very significant bulge at the bottom end, 18% of the pupils obtaining scores at the first percentile, i.e. in the lowest 1% of the normal population.

WHAT INTERVENTION WILL WE USE?

1. All teachers are aware that many of the pupils in the school may have some difficulty in understanding spoken language. After instructions or explanations have been offered the pupils are given an opportunity to tell the teacher what they have understood from the interaction. Any misunderstandings can then be rectified at this stage and the chance of the child getting it wrong because he did not understand in the first place is reduced.
2. We are planning a programme of specific teaching of the aspects of language identified as poorly understood for each child in this group. Re-test in a year.

We do not offer an explanation for the association between low scores on the TROG test and placement in a school for emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children. It could be that children with a specific difficulty in language reception fail to become socialised and behave badly. It could also be that poorly socialised children do not have the opportunity to develop adequate language skills. Maybe both. We consider that our project is useful because we are now able to plan a helpful intervention for pupils, regardless of the unanswered questions about causality.

YOU WORK WITH CHILDREN?

YOU WANT ANSWERS?

YOU TOO CAN DO RESEARCH!

ACTIVITY FOUR

We have used the quotation from Paley's (1980) article to suggest to you that the research we do ourselves, however modest, is more relevant because we participate in finding the answers to the questions we have asked.

Write down the outline of a simple research project that you could carry out with the children or colleagues you work with.

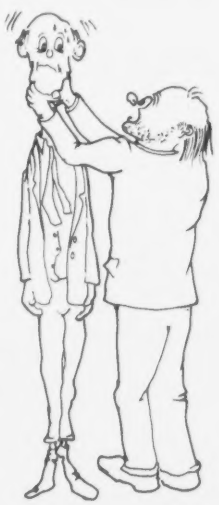
What is the Question?

What will you measure?

How will you measure it?

What intervention will you plan?

'Tell me what the question is.'



RESEARCH CAN BE SIMPLE AND USEFUL

Identify a difficulty
Plan a programme
Take a positive approach
Evaluate what you have done
Feel powerful

You may be asking yourself, "What has school based research got to do with self-concept?" We would answer that it may not only improve your practice, it might also improve your professional self-concept!

A BAG OF TRICKS

At last, here is what you have been waiting for!

Working with children in trouble and watching other people has given us the opportunity to collect a bag full of ideas, tricks and strategies. Some may seem fun and they are presented in a light-hearted way but they are all based on the principle that children with low self-concept are vulnerable; they need protecting from their own destructive behaviour and they need to be accepted.

Read about them, try some of them, let us know how they work out and if you have any to add to the list then please tell us . . . we are quite happy to use other people's ideas!

LABEL THE ACT

Never tell a child he is bad, a liar, a thief. Sure, you are displeased with his BEHAVIOUR, but you still value him. So maintain his self-esteem and tell him that you are disappointed or surprised that a good child like him has done a thing like that. It's just not like him! That way you can both start to expect that he won't do it again.

MONEY IN POCKET

Children come to you with different levels of self-concept and those with high self-concept are likely to achieve the best results. We can make the comparison with money; those with most money in their pockets can take risks, try new things, afford to risk a little and even if they lose some they are not poor. The child with low self-concept is like a child with very little money. He can't afford to gamble because he runs the risk of failing and being left with nothing at all.

So it is up to you to support, encourage and protect the child with low self-concept and you can do this by . . .

TAKING THE RISK YOURSELF

When a child faces a task which puts him at risk of failure you can give him courage by taking the responsibility for possible failure onto your own shoulders.

For example:

1. Remove the threat of failure. "This is very hard but I know you will do your best. Don't worry if you find it difficult, it is my fault for giving you such hard work."
2. Take the blame for failure. "I am sorry, I didn't explain that properly. It is my fault. Let me try again."

3. Offer just enough help and just early enough to prevent failure and consequent breakdown of concentration. It is much easier to intervene when the child is still on task than to rescue a child with low self-concept once he has failed.

APOLOGISE

During a busy working day it is inevitable that occasionally you might have to keep a child waiting, interrupt your attention to him when you are distracted and maybe not manage to do everything you said you would. Make sure that you say that you are sorry, that you ask if you may keep them waiting whilst you attend to some urgent matter. Offer an explanation for your behaviour. That really makes a child feel important, that you care about him as an individual and that he deserves your respect.

PAT ON THE BACK

Non-verbal interventions are a very powerful part of the behavioural dialogue. A hand on the shoulder, a pat on the back, a smile or a wink can convey to a child that you recognise him as an individual and that you care about him.

A very brief non-verbal message offered fairly frequently when a child is behaving well can keep a child on task and give a very positive signal. Bevan and Shortall, (1986).

A WHISPER IN TIME

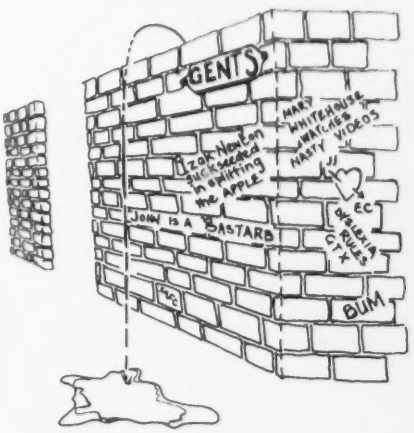
A very, very quiet word whispered to a child when trouble is brewing can be an effective way of preventing the situation from escalating. It is private, it is non-threatening, it gets the child's attention and it brings you physically close to him. It creates an atmosphere that is calm and quiet and it does not inject emotional energy to which the child may react. (It is also a good way to keep your own blood pressure down!)

USE TRUST TO END A PROGRAMME

Use trust to wean a child from a high level of support. Stop measuring the success once you are sure that the child can attain the goal, academic or behavioural, but continue to give the reward for an agreed period of time. "You really know how to do that now. Next week we won't even bother to mark the work/measure the behaviour but you will get your reward on Friday. I know you can do it and I trust you to do your best."

TARGET TEACHING TO SUCCESS

Sometimes our best intended interventions backfire on the child. For example, years of remedial teaching might be confirming to the pupil how badly he has failed and for how long. Identifying an agreed goal to work towards, ensuring that the steps to success are small, measurable and can be demonstrated to the child can turn remedial intervention from a spiral of failure into a ladder of success. For example, Ainscow and Tweddle have discussed this approach in their book, "Preventing Classroom Failure." (1979)



"Well done lad! Your technique is perfect. We will work on aim next."

THE WAY WE TALK TO CHILDREN IN TROUBLE

Sometimes we have to talk to children about unacceptable behaviour and it is important to make sure that these contacts allow the child to maintain self-respect so that he can hope to improve.

CHECKLIST

1. When we ask a question do we give the child a chance to answer?
2. Do we listen to his point of view?
3. Do we check out what the child really understands from the discussion? Asking "Do you understand?" and accepting a nod is not enough.
4. Have you:
   agreed on a definition of the problem?
   agreed a strategy?
   arranged to meet and discuss whether it has worked?

IDEA TWO . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Use this checklist when you next talk to a child about his bad behaviour.

AVOIDING THE NEGATIVE COMMENT TRAP

All of us who work with children share a responsibility for their progress and sometimes that feels like a very heavy burden. We find that, as more and more things go wrong for a child, our interactions with him become very negative. We only seem to talk to him about trouble, to correct mistakes. When things are going well, even for a few minutes, we breathe a sigh of relief and leave well alone. It is a hard job to turn that around and intervene positively as often as possible.

IDEA THREE . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Identify a child who always seems to receive negative comments from you and see how often you can CATCH THE GOOD tomorrow.

Have you read "100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom" Canfield and Wells (1976)? Unfortunately it is now out of print but maybe requests to libraries and letters to the publishers might get it back on the lists. It is great fun and sometimes very moving and you will find some nice ideas to try with the children in your care.

To give you a flavour from their introduction to the book:

YOU CAN DO IT

Any normal person can do the things suggested in 100 Ways. You don't have to be a college graduate. You don't have to be a psychiatrist. You don't have to be emotionally superior. You do have to be able to read, of course, and have reasonable judgement and maturity, and be more sane than otherwise. It helps if you have a sense of humour, are fairly flexible, and if you operate democratically. These are qualities that enhance any relationship . . . All our experience says, "Yes, go ahead! Try it!" The key qualities of caring and empathy mean more in human relationships than any diplomas, degrees or technical skills.

If you care enough about your children to be able to sense what they feel and perhaps even feel what they feel, you have all the prerequisites needed. So don't hesitate, with the guidance provided here, to use the material presented in this book to enrich your children's lives and your own life too.

But this is not enough unless all the messages you give convince the children that you care for them and respect them. The whole school approach should be planned to help children to feel good about themselves.

The necessary planning and the resulting agreed policy will be hard work and difficult to achieve and you can't do it on your own. But remember, ADULTS HAVE SELF-CONCEPTS TOO and working together to agree strategies which will enhance your effectiveness will also enhance your self-concept.

ANOTHER ASSUMPTION . . .

If adults have good self-concept then it is likely that the children in their care will too.

17

ACTIVITY FIVE

Write down three ways in which your establishment raises the self-concept of the staff. If you find this difficult then it may be useful to think hard about the good things, even if they seem trivial.

1.

2.

3.

STRESS AND FRUSTRATION AT WORK

We have included in some of our workshops a problem solving activity which starts by collecting from members information about aspects of their working situation which cause them stress and frustration.

We have observed the effects of failure and lack of appreciation on children and concluded that the result is not only lowered self-esteem but also a reduced chance of improvement and success. Why should it be different for adults? Feeling inadequate, unrecognised and unsupported in our work does not seem to promote job satisfaction and success. Interest and appreciation does.

Are there some aspects of the stress that you experience at work which lower your self-concept?

IDEA FOUR . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Have a staff competition to see who can write the best caption to this cartoon and ask the head to be the judge.

"Of course we can explain everything if we FULLY understand his difficult childhood"

ASPECTS OF JOB STRESS HIGHLIGHTED BY GROUP MEMBERS

TIME

Too many pointless meetings.
Not enough time to deal with individual problems.
Not enough time to support colleagues.
Difficulty in organising time efficiently.

SELF

Feeling inexperienced.
Shouting too much.
Excluding pupils and feeling that you have failed them.

LEADERSHIP

Not liberating staff talents.
Lack of support and encouragement.
Lack of space and resources.
No evaluation of role of clinic-based professionals.

COMMUNICATION WITH COLLEAGUES

Poor communication.
Colleagues who:
- don't listen,
- distort information,
- react violently to another viewpoint.

Lack of meeting time for communication.
Being misunderstood by colleagues.
Lack of understanding between different professional groups.

PUPILS

Powerless to influence family problems.
Strategies to help unmotivated pupils.
Strategies for dealing with pupils who deny problems.

COLLEAGUES

Dealing second-hand with problems.
Colleagues asking for responsibility but not accepting it.
Difficulties in admitting a problem.
Dealing with other people's difficult pupils.
Lack of consistency in managing pupils.
Not following school policy when dealing with pupils.
Leaving a class to deal with a problem.

When we look at this list we can clearly see that many of the stress factors and their solutions lie in the way the environment is organised. Adults' feelings of competence and success can be reduced or enhanced by changes in the institutions in which they work.

SCHOOLS HAVE SELF-CONCEPTS

In the early '70s the controversy surrounding the recent change from selective secondary education to comprehensive schooling for most children prompted researchers to look closely at what schools were doing and how they were doing it. They found that schools with quite similar (socio-economic) intakes produced very different outcomes.

POWER (1976) worked in Tower Hamlets 1958-1964 and his research indicated that certain schools seemed to protect their pupils from delinquency whilst others provided an environment which included delinquent behaviour. This difference could not be explained by features such as size of school, type of building, intake etc. The research offered no answers but it did pose some very interesting questions.

REYNOLDS et al (1976) reported his study carried out in South Wales in which he tried to identify the features of the schools which produce different behavioural outcomes in the pupils. He looked at three aspects: attendance, academic success and delinquency. His findings were:

1. Schools are consistent. During the two periods 1966-67 and 1972-73 the schools showed similar results.
2. High academic success is associated with good attendance and low rate of delinquency.

They concluded that what happens for a child in school between 9.00 am and 4.00 pm is important in determining what type of child emerges at the end of the educational process.

RUTTER et al (1979) extended this line of research and followed children through from primary into secondary schools. They looked at attendance, academic achievement, behaviour and delinquency and suggested that factors such as

availability of incentives and rewards,
giving of responsibility to pupils,
positive ethos of the school,

were important features of successful schools. Although their work has been criticised for various weaknesses in research method they have drawn important attention to the importance of giving success, status and personal worth to pupils who are not likely to achieve good academic results.

ACTIVITY SIX

Imagine that you can wave a magic wand and create an effective school. You can make five changes to your institution and you can make the decisions right now without consulting anyone.

(Oh be realistic! We don't mean unlimited money or resources. The wand can only change organisation, philosophy and channels of support and communication. Isn't that enough magic for you?)

Write down your top five changes:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

"Goodness me! It works."

The most recent strand to this line of enquiry is the account of THE JUNIOR SCHOOL PROJECT carried out in ILEA which looked at 2,000 children in 50 junior schools during a four year period. In their conclusions they identify 12 factors which they feel are important determining features of effective schools.

TWELVE KEY FACTORS FOR SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

1. Powerful leadership.

"I knew you would see reason if I explained it clearly"

2. Involvement of the deputy.
3. Involvement of teachers.
4. Consistency among teachers.
5. Structured teaching sessions.
6. Intellectually challenging teaching.
7. Work-centred environment.
8. Limited focus within teaching sessions.
9. Maximum communication between teachers and pupils.
10. Good record keeping.
11. Parental involvement (informal open door policy).
12. **POSITIVE CLIMATE.**

Now look back to your own top five and compare your priorities with those identified in the report.

Effective schools demonstrated a positive ethos. Emphasis was placed on praise and reward. Self-control was encouraged rather than attention given to poor behaviour. Control in classrooms was firm but fair with children being treated as individuals. Teachers took care to talk to pupils in a personal way showing that they recognised the child's individuality. Activities were organised at lunchtimes and after school, school trips were arranged and the staff ate lunch with the pupils.

IDEA FIVE . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Read the summary of The Junior School Project (less than 40 pages!).

Copy the list of the twelve key factors and circulate it to your colleagues to encourage discussion at a staff meeting.

Agree on one aspect to work on and set an achievable target. Don't be too impatient or ambitious, change is often incremental, "from little acorns . . ."

The problem solving part of our workshop included a brainstorming exercise in which members wrote lists and drew diagrams to illustrate the changes that they would make to their organisations if they were in a position of senior management.

As you can see from Table 1 all roads lead to the same destination . . . BETTER COMMUNICATION! What a surprise!

Problem solving groups suggested the following strategies to improve communication within the schools:

Table 1

TO ENHANCE STAFF SELF-CONCEPT

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

CONSULTATION
to include:
finance
appointments
policy document
priorities of establishment

SHOULD BE OPEN

SHOULD INCLUDE
parents, pupils and
outside agencies.

SUPPORT
staff, especially
new members
create forum for
shared support,
staff meetings.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT
Inservice training.
Staff to be involved
in planning.
Use of staff skills.
Collect staff ideas.
Develop parity
between members of
staff.

CONFLICT
Forum to give grievances
opportunities to resolve disputes.

INFORMATION
Knowledge of lines
of communication.
Freedom of information.

EVALUATION TO BE WELCOMED

IDEA SIX . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Use the pages generated by our workshops as discussion documents at a staff meeting or inservice session in your own institution.

1. Choose one area of difficulty.
2. Decide on a strategy.
3. Implement it.
4. Evaluate it.

You may be surprised at the results!

THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Since the implementation of the 1981 Act there has been a notable change in the climate and ethos in mainstream education towards increased responsibility for meeting the needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Changes in climate and ethos are not enough. Like any other aspect of the curriculum the control, management and response to children with emotional and behavioural difficulties must be planned carefully in each school and understood by all members of staff. This aspect of curriculum management deserves its own policy document which will help existing members of staff to work in a consistent way and ensure that new teachers joining the school understand the school's policy.

Interventions intended to reduce or avoid disturbed behaviour in pupils, management techniques employed to contain or control undesirable behaviour and strategies designed to prevent future occurrence should be considered.

These may be agreed and employed at three points on the continuum:

INDIVIDUAL TEACHER INTERVENTION	AGREED TEACHER SUPPORT	WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The individual teacher is likely to be restricted to techniques which can be employed within a classroom setting and in the presence of several other children. This affects the nature and duration of the intervention. It will be necessary to consider the effect of any intervention with one exceptional individual on the group as a whole, both in terms of altering group expectations of acceptable behaviour and also the loss of teacher time to the rest of the class.

Teachers working with colleague support may offer time-out, rewarding reinforcement or negative sanctions to each other's pupils. Supervision of the rest of the class may be arranged to allow the teacher the opportunity to interview an individual child and pursue an issue which would benefit from immediate attention. Communication between colleagues must be well planned to avoid the wrong intervention. Remember the poor little boy in "Kes" who is sent to the head with a message and gets caned because he happens to be standing with the bad boys at caning time!

A whole school policy, understood, agreed and implemented throughout the school allows for the most effective teacher interventions, supported by colleagues and set in the environment of a negotiated structure.

A SCHOOL THAT SMILES

RULES SHOULD BE FEW,

REWARDS EXPLICIT

and

PUNISHMENT MILD.

All three must be fully understood by pupils and teachers. Limits of tolerable behaviour must be agreed by all adults and this may mean that they have to be set at the level expected by the least tolerant. As confidence increases these limits of tolerance may be renegotiated without threat of loss of class control, copying behaviour from other children or complaints from parents. We find it easy to allow for a wide variety of scholastic performance in pupils but expect a high degree of conformity of behaviour.

"Good, that is settled. We agree to send all the difficult ones to Mr Jones.

IDEA SEVEN . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Try our workshop activity on stress and frustration at work. Use a staff meeting or INSET time to

1. List points of stress/frustration.
2. Group them under headings, e.g. communication, leadership, time.
3. Work in groups to brainstorm ideas for change.
4. Establish a whole school approach, however modest, to identify, manage and reduce staff stress. Remember that a list of two items might be possible. A list of twenty-two is certainly not.
5. Approach advisory staff to assist in planning In-service programmes.

"Oh well, I am sure they will manage somehow."

ADULTS MUST FEEL POWERFUL

We have talked a lot about change at every level from a whole school approach involving everyone in the institution down to small changes that one isolated person might make to the way he deals with pupils. There is always something you can do to make your environment a place where children will feel safe, valued and successful.

If you are reading this it is likely that you work with children who have encountered failure, either with school work, behaviour or relationships. We have not attempted to give you lists of strategies for dealing with these children. Instead we hope that we have said to you that, whichever way you work with children, the most important thing to carry in the front of your mind is that you can make each child feel accepted and liked, even in the face of unlikeable and unacceptable behaviour.

IDEA EIGHT . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Think about the things that you feel enhance your own self-esteem, the things that you know you shine at and earn you the respect of other people. Maybe you can teach the children you work with how to share some of that satisfaction. It could be anything, cooking a pizza, make-up, flying a kite . . . as long as it is something you are confident that is within the child's capabilities. Be careful not to let him in for another failure.

Burland (1977) uses a vast collection of leisure and "show off" skills such as riding a uni-cycle or performing a card trick to provide the children at his school with an "I can . . ." repertoire.

What better way to help a child feel good than to teach him to be good at something? Of course, you have to be very certain that you can teach him well enough for him to achieve success. His failure would be your fault, not his. That's Power!

A first grader proudly showed his mother the gold star he had earned in school. "We get these for what we do best," he explained. "And what do you do best?" she asked. "I'm the best reader!" beamed the boy.

From "100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom."

ACTIVITY SEVEN

Make a list of four things, practical, academic, social or just fun that you could teach to a child to enhance his "I can do . . ." repertoire.

MY STRONG POINTS ARE:

1.

2.

3.

4.

ARE YOU FEELING POWERFUL YET?

CONCLUSION

We see so many acronyms we decided we must have one of our own so we give you:

OUR POP MESSAGE

P

is for **PRAISE.**

Take every opportunity to make positive statements about a child. Make him really believe that you like him and regard him as a worthwhile individual. Don't just concentrate on behaviour or academic performance; look at the whole person but always make your praise honest and believable.

O

is for **OPTIMISM.**

The child is with you for several hours each day and there is always something you can do. If you ever have a really bad day remember the "Manyana Principle . . . There is always tomorrow."

P

is for **PROBLEMS.**

Which don't exist. You are faced with difficulties and you have to make a decision about what you and your colleagues are going to do. Your first attempt may not be successful but you have gained valuable information and experience to help you make a better second decision.

We hope that you will remember that every interaction you have with a child, verbal messages and body language, will be interpreted by him as an evaluation of himself, will affect his self-concept and will thus change him. We are asking you to do everything that you can to make sure that the messages he receives will improve his self-concept.

We don't pretend that this approach will solve all problems for all children. For some it may only touch the surface and the factors which are outside your control; the time they spend away from you in the care of other adults, their past experiences and sometimes their physical attributes, may undermine the approach you attempt. Even if you are fighting a losing battle you may be able to do some little thing, to put a small coin in the child's self-concept pocket which he may keep and spend at some time in the future!

LIZA. "You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, BUT HOW SHE IS TREATED. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

Pygmalion, G.B.S.

Our intention has not been to provide you with answers; only you can do that, working in and knowing your own environment.

We hope that we have made you think about self-concept as an important issue for children and the people who teach and care for them. What can you do that is more important for anybody than to help them feel good about themselves?

We cannot emphasise too much how important you are to the children in your care. Look at it this way . . .

Maybe you work in an adult/child ratio of 1 to 5, 1 to 15, 1 to 30. However big the group the child will describe you as:

MY care-worker,
MY social worker,
MY teacher.

In our work we meet the same stresses that you do and experience the same disappointments when children fail to respond, the pain of feeling helpless when children seem bent on self-destruction. There is no easy answer but we hope that in this booklet we have offered you a positive approach which will help you to feel that you are powerful, you can help children.

IDEA NINE . . . WHY DON'T YOU?

Write to us, open up channels of communication and let us know what you think of this booklet; has it produced any ideas for staff discussion, research projects? We would like to hear your point of view and we promise to reply.

Following the publication of this Workshop in Print we have developed a new self-esteem scale called B/G-STEEM and a teaching video called BAG-OF-TRICKS. Please contact us if you would like some more information.

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Association of Workers for Maladjusted Children

The Association of Workers for Maladjusted Children was formed:

(a) to bring together those working with children and adolescents who are emotionally disturbed, or who have behavioural and/or learning problems in order to compare their experiences and to exchange ideas;

(b) to encourage closer contact between the staffs of schools, hostels, hospitals and other units with Child Guidance Clinics, Educational Services and various Social Work agencies working with these children;

(c) to give workers such as probation officers, teachers in ordinary schools, administrative officers and others in frequent contact with these children and their families an opportunity to contribute from their special experience.

The present Association is an amalgamation between the Association of Workers for Maladjusted Children, founded in 1951, and the Association for Therapeutic Education, founded in 1959. The Association, known by its initials A.W.M.C., brings together all those working with children and adolescents whose major special needs lie in the area of emotional, behavioural and/or learning difficulties.

The Association of Workers for Maladjusted Children is a multi-disciplinary association of people concerned with the care, education and treatment of maladjusted children. It has individual members, including social workers, teachers, child care workers, nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists. Corporate membership is available for institutions such as schools, hostels, clinics, special units and community homes dealing with maladjusted and emotionally disturbed children.

The Association's discussions and work have always covered a wide field and a wide spectrum of views. Meetings arranged by the Association, both regionally and nationally, provide the opportunity to gain a wider perspective and fuller understanding of the complexities of the problems being tackled by our members.

Further details about the Association are available from The General Secretary, AWMC, Red Hill School, East Sutton, Maidstone, Kent ME17 3DQ.

THEY

THINK

THEY

CAN

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